

STATE OF JEFFERSON OBSERVER



National Weather Service

Spring 2004

Medford, Oregon

Introduction

As I write this, we are enjoying fabulous spring weather with sunny skies and warm daytime temperatures. We did have some interesting winter weather and this is discussed in detail in this issue of the spotter newsletter. Who knows, there may even be one of you out there who got stranded in late December on Siskiyou Pass.

In this edition of the newsletter there is an article on the U.S. Climate Reference Network. This network is being expanded across the country to definitively answer the question of whether our climate is changing. This is a very complex issue, but this high tech observing equipment should be able to give us an answer years down the road.

Each year more of you are receiving Internet access along with email accounts. Our goal is to have every spotter who is on the "information highway" receive their newsletter online. It saves us from mailing it to you, and you can view it much sooner than "snail mail."

We already have a dozen spotter class trainings planned between late May and late June. We hope to see you all there to refresh your memory about summer severe weather. Enjoy the warm weather and let's hope the upcoming fire season is a dud.

At the top of Mount Shasta air pressure is only 60% of what it is at sea level, and so there is only 60% of the oxygen available to breathe.

Summary of the weather between October 2003 and March 2004 for Medford

Summer-like weather lingered into early October with temperatures 80 deg F or above through the 6th in Medford. A significant cooling trend followed with highs generally in the 50s and 60s through the 15th. A bout of Indian Summer weather developed with highs mainly in the 70s and 80s through the 28th. Little precipitation fell in October making it the fifth driest in Medford, and the fire season remained active throughout the region. Three record highs were set at the end of October.

November was mainly cloudy and chilly with the first light snowfall in the Rogue Valley on the 4th. The coldest temperature for the entire fall and winter once again came very early in the season as the mercury fell to 22 deg F on the 1st and this reading was repeated on the 23rd.

In December, low pressure systems and fronts frequented the region as they often do this time of the year. December was wetter than normal, but also much warmer than normal. In fact, it was the fifth warmest December in the past 30 years. Little snow fell at the Medford airport. However, blizzard conditions at the end of the month stranded hundreds of holiday travelers on Siskiyou Pass. For all of 2003 there were only four days with measurable snowfall and a total snow accumulation of only 0.7 inches.

January began wet with snow storms in the mountains. High pressure followed with drier conditions. Weather systems became more frequent toward the end of the month. Precipitation for the month was about normal and it was warmer than normal. Snow fell on six days in January for a total of 4.1 inches. The greatest snow depth

at the Medford Weather Service office was 2.8 inches on the 2nd.

Leap year February was much wetter and warmer than normal. The wettest system moved through the Rogue Valley mid-month dumping 2.27 inches of rain. It was also a windy month with a peak wind of 51 mph at the Medford airport early in the morning on the 25th.

March was extremely sunny and mild for this time of year. There were 17 clear days, 7 partly cloudy days, and only 7 cloudy days. In fact, it was the 2nd warmest March on record with an average daytime high of 66 degrees at the Medford airport. The highest temperature of the month was 81 deg F on the 29th. Precipitation was well below normal with no snowfall. The total snowfall for the entire season was only 4.6 inches through the end of March.

Noteworthy weather events

November - A localized snow storm occurred in the Jess Valley of southeast Modoc county. A NWS cooperative observer in the Jess Valley received 10 inches of snow on the 3rd. The city of Alturas, only 20 miles to the northwest of the Jess Valley received only 0.35 inches of precipitation which would typically result in 3 to 4 inches of snowfall. This type of situation occurs frequently in our part of the country where weather conditions can change dramatically across short distances due to the many mountains and valleys.

December - A record blizzard struck northern California and southern Oregon. The storm began early Sunday evening on the 28th and continued into Monday afternoon the 29th. Snow levels were unusually low ranging from below 500 feet in the Redding area to 1500 to 2500 feet around Medford.

The snow was wet and heavy, accompanied by gusty winds for whiteout conditions. The highest wind gust of 61 mph occurred in the Shasta Valley near Weed. Many areas between Redding and Ashland received between 1 and 2 *feet* of snow with snowdrifts of 7 feet. Both Mt. Ashland and Mt. Shasta ski areas received about 3 feet of snow. Interstate 5 was closed to traffic between Redding and Ashland at 9 pm Sunday the 28th with an estimated 300 people stranded on Siskiyou Summit overnight. Many holiday travelers were stranded in other areas along

the I-5 corridor filling up hotel rooms (one of our employees coming back from Nevada spent the night at the Weed rest area). About 150 travelers took shelter with the Red Cross in Yreka, and 300 travelers spent the night with the Red Cross at Southern Oregon University in Ashland. Nearly 800 people, mostly travelers, sought help from the Red Cross in Siskiyou county on Monday the 29th. There were 14,500 homes and businesses without power in Shasta county. The storm knocked out power to 8200 customers in Jackson county.

Snowfall amounts Dec. 28-29, 2003

Location	Snow (in.)	Location	Snow (in.)
Crater Lake	15	Yreka	17-24
Diamond Lake	18	Mt. Shasta City	21-26
Howard Prairie	13-14	Fort Jones	19
Klamath Falls	6-12	Dunsmuir	25
Keno	12-13	Alturas	4-5
Lakeview	8-12	N. Redding	18

January - The new year began where December left-off with stormy weather. An unusually cold air mass persisted, producing snow in the valleys. Much of the snow fell on Thursday the 1st. It was a wet and heavy snow which downed trees and power lines, leaving an estimated 8000 residents without electricity in Siskiyou county. About 20 Medford residences and 715 homes and businesses in Grants Pass and Rogue River lost electricity.

Our stormy weather paled in comparison to the snow and ice storm which pummeled the Columbia River Gorge and entire Willamette Valley. This paralyzing ice storm was the worst in about 7 years . The far southern extent of the freezing rain barely made it into our forecast area when the region north of Roseburg saw light freezing rain

and black ice road conditions for a brief time on highway 38 around Elkton.

Extremely heavy snow of 100 inches in late December and early January prompted the issuance of an Avalanche Warning for Crater Lake National Park. The warning was for significantly increasing and generally high avalanche danger in the Crater Lake area between the 6th and 9th of January.

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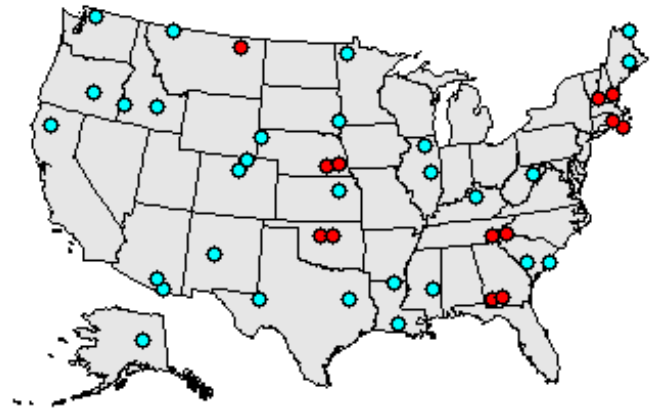
February - A wind storm struck the Rogue Valley in the early morning of the 25th. The wind peaked at 51 mph at the Medford airport at 5:14 am. Toppled trees, downed branches and other moderate damage were common (your editor lost roof shingles). California took the brunt of this storm with 159,000 customers without power at some point on the 25th between Bakersfield and the Oregon border. Half of these customers were in the San Francisco Bay area.

Winter's wettest weather visited the Rogue Valley Monday the 16th into Tuesday the 17th. Between 10 am Tuesday and 10 am Wednesday a storm dumped 1.71 inches of rain at the Medford airport. This same storm also dumped 2 to 3 feet of snow on Mt. Ashland. Small streams were pushed to bankful, but caused little damage around the Rogue Valley. The duration of this weather pattern was relatively short, otherwise major river flooding would have occurred. The major rivers rose rapidly but stayed below flood stage. This storm had the classic "Pineapple Express" with moisture originating near the Hawaiian Islands.

radiation. By 2006, the network will be a sprawling link of 100 stations. The goal of the network is to provide the best possible data for national climate trends over the next 50 to 100 years. Site location is very important as the conditions measured must not be affected by urban expansion or other conditions that create a changing local environment. This network will serve as a benchmark for climate monitoring.

It will be welcomed in the West which is home to the wettest, driest, coldest, hottest, and snowiest places in the country. This will be the first weather observing network that the U.S. has set up *just* for monitoring the climate.

The data are transmitted hourly from each station to GOES satellites, and sent to the National Climatic Data Center for quality control and archiving. This data will improve the ability of America's decision-makers to form policies about programs impacted by climate variability and change. For more information their web site is found at www.ncdc.noaa.gov/oa/climate/uscrn.



Current locations in the Climate Reference Network.

NOAA begins deployment of its U.S. Climate Reference Network

The U.S. Climate Reference Network is a high-tech system designed to track the nation's climate and precipitation trends. There are 46 monitoring stations operating in 28 states, logging real-time measurements of temperature, precipitation, wind speed, and solar

How to receive the spotter newsletter sooner

Would you rather receive this newsletter via e-mail? If so, please take a minute and e-mail Jim Reynolds at: mfr.spotter@noaa.gov

All it takes is your e-mail address and Internet access.

Twice a year we will send you an e-mail showing you where to go on the Internet to find the latest edition of the spotter newsletter. You can then see the newsletter about **3 to 4 weeks** sooner than if we had to mail you a copy.

WCM Corner

Greetings! We here at NWS Medford hope that you have enjoyed the magnificent spring weather that we have been experiencing off and on since around mid March. I have only been in the area for about four years now but I do not remember this much nice weather this early in the year. Now that winter is firmly behind us, it is time to prepare for the weather that we will encounter during the summer months.

As of this writing, I have scheduled a dozen summer weather spotter talks from late May through much of June. I am happy to announce that we will be breaking new ground in Siskiyou County this spring by providing trainings in Tennant and Greenview, CA. Another new city that we will be providing a training in is Cave Junction in Josephine County, OR. As we have tried to get into the habit, we will do our best to give you a personal phone call or send a reminder email to let you know when we will be conducting a training in your area.

As you have heard me mention in previous newsletters, we are still soliciting email addresses from new and existing spotters to add to our Medford Spotter Email Database. Also as previously mentioned, we are doing this in an attempt to provide another medium in which to get our newsletter out to you more quickly and efficiently. We now have just over 200 addresses in the database which accounts for about one-third of our 600+ households on our roster. As a reminder, for those that provide an email address, we will send you an email with an Internet link that you can go to to access the newsletter. For those of you that are not currently on our list to receive the newsletter Internet link via email and would like to, please send your request to mfr.spotter@noaa.gov

As always, my offer stands to provide additional trainings for groups of a dozen or more beyond those trainings that are already scheduled. If you would like to set up a training with me, please contact me at the number provided.

I look forward to seeing all of you again soon and to meeting any friends that you would like to bring with you to the spotter talks for possible recruitment, or just some good clean weather fun.

Best regards.

Jim Reynolds
(541) 776-4303
james.reynolds@noaa.gov

2004 summer weather spotter class schedule

Thursday, May 20 - Douglas County
6-8 p.m. Douglas County Courthouse in Reedsport

Thursday, June 3 - Lake County
6-8 p.m. at the Lake County Court House

Thursday, June 10 - Jackson County
7-9 p.m. at the National Weather Service office in Medford

Monday, June 14 - Klamath County
Class from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Location to be announced.

Tuesday, June 15 - Siskiyou County
6-8 p.m. at the Greenview Senior Center

Wednesday, June 16 - Modoc County
6:30-8:30 p.m. County Office of Education
139 W. Henderson in Alturas

Thursday, June 17 - Siskiyou County
1-3 p.m. Home Hall in Tennant

Monday, June 21 - Josephine County
Class from 6:30-8:30 p.m. in the Cave Junction Pizza Deli Meeting Room
Optional dinner at 5:30 p.m.

Tuesday, June 22 - Curry County
7-9 p.m. in the Blue Room of the Gold Beach County Annex

Wednesday, June 23 - Coos County
6-8 p.m. OSU Extension Building Myrtle Point
631 Alder St. - located one block behind the Safeway store, off 6th St.

Thursday, June 24 - Siskiyou County
6-8 p.m. Mt. Shasta Fire District on West Reem Ave.

Monday, June 28 - Douglas County
6-8 p.m. Douglas County Library in Roseburg

Spotter's reporting criteria

When you observe weather conditions that meet or exceed the summer criteria listed, telephone your report as soon as possible to the Medford NWS office. Please give us your spotter I.D., your location, and the time of your observation. Our toll-free number for *only* spotter reporting

1-800-483-4573

1. Tornadoes and funnel clouds.
2. Hail with a diameter of at least ½ inch.
3. Sustained wind speed of 35 mph or greater.
4. Very heavy rain (½ inch or more per hour).
5. Rainfall in excess of one inch in 12 hours, and 1-1/2 inches in 24 hours.
6. Flooding of any kind.
7. Any weather related damage
8. Any weather phenomena that endangers life and property.
9. Earthquakes or tremors when felt.

We appreciate a call if there is significant weather occurring which you know is **not** in our forecast.

Spotter reports

We have good news and bad news. First the bad news. Unfortunately due to the **Privacy Act** we are not able to list the spotter reports in our newsletter. We appreciate all of your calls more than ever, but will not be able to list the calls in this newsletter. We also appreciate it when we call you and you are more than happy to help us with a weather report.

Now for the good news. We are able to display the locations of all of you (600+ spotters) on our computers. This was a major undertaking especially since many of you have rural addresses that were difficult to locate. Luckily, when you filled out your spotter forms you gave good directions using landmarks, intersections, and towns. Knowing your locations instantly will be very helpful to us during bad weather. For instance, we can run a Doppler radar loop on our monitor and zoom in to show exactly where a storm is located relative to a particular spotter. We can then call you if we think the storm may be severe. We can also display your approximate elevation.

For our region the next total lunar eclipse occurs October 27, 2004 between about 723 pm and 844 pm. This is when the moon passes through the earth's shadow.

The next total solar eclipse in Oregon will be near Portland on August 21, 2017. This is when the earth passes through the moon's shadow.

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IF YOU HAVE ANY WEATHER RELATED QUESTIONS PLEASE WRITE US,
SEND ME E-MAIL OR GIVE US A CALL AT 541-776-4303.

